



Cardiovascular Disease: America's Leading Killer

Cardiovascular disease (CVD), principally heart disease and stroke, is among the nation's leading killers for both men and women and among all racial and ethnic groups.

FACT: More than 60 million Americans have some form of CVD, including high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, stroke, congestive heart failure, and other conditions.

FACT: More than 2,600 Americans die each day of CVD. That is an average of 1 death every 33 seconds.

FACT: CVD cost the nation an estimated \$299 billion in 2001, including health expenditures and lost productivity.

Heart disease and stroke – the principal components of cardiovascular disease – are the first and third leading causes of death in the United States, accounting for more than 40% of all deaths. About 950,000 Americans die of cardiovascular disease each year. Although cardiovascular disease is often thought to primarily affect men and older people, it is a major killer of women and people in the prime of life. More than half of all cardiovascular disease deaths each year occur among women.

Death is Only Part of the Picture

A consideration of deaths alone understates the burden of cardiovascular disease. Over 60 million Americans (almost one-fourth of the population) live with this disease. Heart disease is a leading cause of disability among working adults. Stroke alone accounts for disability among more than 1 million Americans. Almost 6 million hospitalizations each year are due to cardiovascular disease.

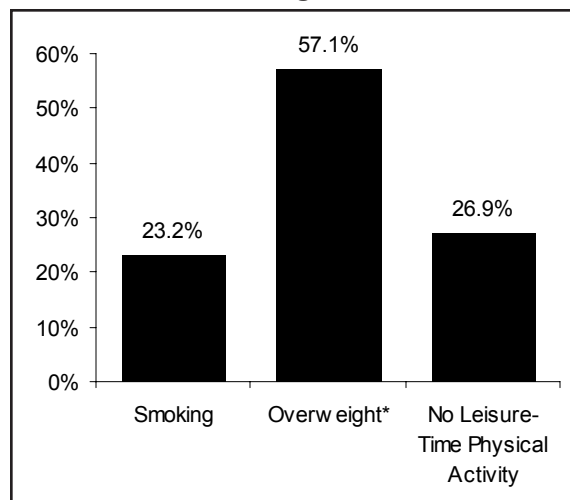
The economic impact of cardiovascular disease on the U.S. health care system continues to grow as the population ages. The estimated cost of cardiovascular disease in the United States in 2001 was \$298 billion, including health care expenditures and lost productivity.

Risk Behaviors

Three health-related behaviors contribute markedly to cardiovascular disease:

Tobacco Use. Smokers have twice the risk for heart attack of nonsmokers. Nearly one-fifth of all deaths from cardiovascular disease, or about 190,000 deaths a year, are smoking related. Every day, more than 3,000 young people become daily smokers. In Missouri, 18,200 children under the age of 18 become new daily smokers each year.

Behavioral Risk Factors for Cardiovascular Disease among U.S. Adults



*Body mass index 25.0 kg/m²

Source: CDC, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2000

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Risk Behaviors (Continued)

Lack of physical activity. People who are not physically active have twice the risk of heart disease of those who are active. More than half the U.S. adults do not achieve recommended levels of physical activity, which includes approximately 30 minutes of moderate activity done most days of the week.

Poor nutrition. People who are overweight have a higher risk for cardiovascular disease. Almost 60% of U.S. adults are overweight or obese. Only 18% of women and 20% of men report eating five servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

Modifying these behaviors is critical both for preventing and for controlling cardiovascular disease. Other steps that adults who have cardiovascular disease should take to reduce their risk of death and disability include adhering to treatment for high blood pressure and cholesterol, using aspirin as appropriate, and learning the symptoms of heart attack and stroke. Warning signs for women are different than they are for men, and may include: feeling breathless, often without chest pain of any kind; flu-like symptoms – specifically nausea, clamminess or cold sweats; unexplained fatigue; pain in the upper back, shoulders, neck or jaw; and feelings of anxiety.

Missouri Women and Heart Disease

Women and Heart Disease: An Atlas of Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Mortality, a new publication from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and West Virginia University, features six heart disease mortality maps for the state of Missouri.

Women ages 35 years and older who lived in Missouri during 1991 through 1995 were studied. Overall, a total of 47,181 women in Missouri died from diseases of the heart during the five-year study period.

County variations in heart disease death rates were mapped for all women, American Indian and Alaska Native women, Asian and Pacific Islander women, African American women, Hispanic women, and Caucasian women in Missouri.

Missouri	Number of deaths 1991-95	Heart disease death rates 1991-95 (per 100,000)	National rank* 1 = lowest rate
American Indian/Alaska Native women	38	182	9 of 32 states
Asian/Pacific Islander women	44	219	25 of 35 states
African American women	4,087	585	37 of 43 states
Hispanic women (includes all races)	138	348	29 of 41 states
Caucasian women	43,012	417	39 of 51 states
ALL WOMEN	47,181	430	36 of 51 states

*For each racial and ethnic group, all states (including the District of Columbia) with sufficient data were ranked. States with very small populations of women in particular racial or ethnic groups often had insufficient data for analysis.

Counties with the highest heart disease death rates for all women in Missouri were found in the southeastern region of the state, including the boot heel region. The lowest rates of heart disease mortality occurred in the northwestern corner of the state and near Columbia, Jefferson City, and surrounding areas. Kansas City and Springfield experienced intermediate heart disease death rates.

Within Missouri, African American women experienced the highest heart disease death rate, whereas the lowest rate was found for American Indian/Alaska Native women.

– National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Atlanta, Georgia